News from around the Southeast Conference!

We Need Your Help with our 50th Anniversary Commemorative Calendar

Did you know that:

- June 25, 1972 was the UCC ordination date of the first openly gay minister, Rev. William R. Johnson?
- September 3, 1846 the AMA (American Missionary Association) was organized?
- July 1, 1839 African slaves revolted and overtook the schooner, La Amistad?

What are the important dates in the life of your church? We want to know!

The Conference will publish a commemorative 2016 calendar filled with dates from all our Conference churches. This calendar will be available for purchase and is in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary celebration of the Southeast UCC Conference.

To submit dates, email them to Debbie Spearman at dspearman@secucc.org by October 12.

Board of Directors Fall Retreat

The Southeast Conference Board of Directors met for their Fall Retreat, September 25-26, at Lake Lanier Islands Resort in Buford Georgia. Rev. Dr. Cari Jackson facilitated the retreat focusing on leadership development, team building, and beginning a visioning process for the Southeast Conference as we begin to look at the ministry of the Conference moving forward.

The Board Ambassadors program was launched with the new and continuing Board members. (See the Board Roster here)

All congregations have been partnered with a Board member to build a relationship with the Conference and with leaders. Expect to hear from your Board Ambassador in the near future. And remember to invite them to your special events such as anniversaries or special programs. They will be in contact with you to present Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM) and Five for Five certificates among other ways of connecting and honoring your ministries in the Southeast Conference.

The Board of Directors looks forward to serving local churches and pastors in the coming year as we begin the work of visioning and strategic planning for the life and work of the Southeast Conference.

Alabama-Tennessee Association Annual Meeting

We invite you to our Annual Meeting in Centerpoint, AL at Covenant Community Church United Church of Christ. Our meeting will begin on Friday, October 2, and conclude on Saturday afternoon, October 3, 2015. "A Conversation on Race" is our theme for this gathering.

On Friday evening, our keynote speaker is the Rev. Traci Blackmon, pastor of Christ the King Church UCC in Florisant, Missouri who is a voice for justice in Ferguson, MO and beyond. Our praise and worship will be led by the pastor of Covenant Community the Rev. R.J. Finney and their worship team. On Saturday, we will have workshop discussions on race for this "kairos" moment [appointed time] and continue the business of the AL/TN/MS Association.

For details and a registration form, please contact Mr. Joe Griffin at Covenant Community Church UCC, 2205 3rd St NE, Center Point, AL 35215. Phone 205-599-3363.

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2015. Each month, we will publish a weekly list for the month and post them weekly on our Facebook page. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

- Click here to download the October and November prayer list
- Click here to download the entire 2015 prayer list

Highlights for September:

- Prayers for **Michael McCaulley** who is hospitalized. Michael is a member of Peace Congregational in Clemson SC and a Member in Discernment.
- Prayers for the family of **Kelly Gissendaner**, a member at Central UCC in Atlanta. Also prayers for **Rev. Sally Purvis** who was Kelly's chaplain while she was on death row. There will be a memorial service for Kelly at Central Congregational on Saturday, October 12. Michael Pater at Central wrote about Kelly's death on his blog: http://whereheartandmindmeet.ccuccatl.com/2015/10/01/no-justice-without-mercy/
- The Conference Office has been informed of the death of **Rev. Herbert Gessert** on July 24, 2015 at the age of 88 years. Some in the Southeast Conference may remember him during his decade of working in the President's office at Talladega College beginning in 1967. He is survived by his wife Jacquie and three children: Debby (and her husband Jack) of the Isle of Palms near Charleston, South Carolina; Suzi of Williamsburg, Virginia; and Jim of St. Charles, Missouri -- as well as two devoted grandsons Johnny and Sean of Charleston, South Carolina.
- **Rev. Paul Eknes-Tucker** will be installed at Pilgrim UCC in Birmingham on October 4.
- **Jodi Yarini** will be installed as licensed pastor at Decatur UCC on November 1.
- Brookmeade Congregational UCC in Nashville has called **Rev. Sharon Temple** as a Designated Transitional Minister for a two year term. She will begin November 1.

Churches in Transition:

Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain Georgia; Church of the Savior, Alpharetta Georgia; Peace Congregational UCC, Clemson South Carolina; Pensacola UCC, Pensacola Florida; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga Tennessee, Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Howard Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee.

Now Accepting Grant Applications

Now through October 31, churches can apply for a Conference Grant. Just go to www.secucc.org and click on the green application button in the top right hand corner. Questions about the grants can be directed to Debbie Spearman.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE:
Reports from Churches that Received Conference Grants

PEACE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH , CLEMSON
Conference Grant received for INTERFAITH BULLYING PREVENTION

Jody Usher, moderator, writes the following update on their project: "We will bring together interfaith religious groups in our area whose youth face hostility. Peace Church has developed programs for LGBTQ+ youth, and we are concerned about the hostile world they face. We know the experience of the youth we have worked with has parallels in the experience of African-American and Muslim youth. Our goal is to bring faith groups together, around an issue on which we all have something to learn and something to teach. Our pilot program for adults is a dinner for 40 to 50 people from 5 to 7 faith groups. The host church is Abel Baptist who's Food Ministry will do the cooking. This event will take place on Wednesday Oct. 7 from 6:00 to 8:00pm and includes a visiting "expert" from Olweus Bullying Prevention Program at Clemson University.

Visit the Conference website for a list of other congregations who are making a difference.

Neighbors in Need Special Mission Offering

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the UCC that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry(CAIM). Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants.

Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. Funding is provided through donations to the Neighbors in Need offering. Recent grant recipients in Southeast Conference include **Open Table UCC** in Mobile for a LGBT Teen Center; **Church of the Savior Knoxville** for a worker justice outreach program; **Praxis Americus** for the Community Home School Cooperative to develop and implement an anti-bullying curriculum; **Unity UCC in Montgomery** for Unity Academy, an after school and college preparatory program; and **Circular Congregational** in Charleston for Charleston Area Justice Ministry, an ecumenical network addressing issues of justice in the Charleston area.

Most UCC congregations will receive the NIN offering on October 4, 2015 as part of their World Communion Sunday observance. however, some local churches select another date. NIN contributions can be made online at any time here.

Global Ministries Refugee Response

The United Church of Christ, through Global Ministries, has been working with our partners in the Middle East since the beginning of the current immigration and refugee crisis in Jordon, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. Our church is committed to working with those partners on site to meet the immediate needs of the refugees, those internally displaced and advocating for justice and fair treatment of all God's children.

We also have longstanding partners in Europe who are responding. The Waldensian Church in Italy is addressing the tragedy of refugees crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa and there have been direct conversations with German and Hungarian partners who are responding to the influx into their countries.

Global Ministries has been working with our partners in two ways: meeting the immediate needs of the refuges and the internally displaced, and doing justice advocacy to address the underlying causes. Information is regularly posted on the Middle East and Europe portion of the Global Ministries website: http://www.globalministries.org/mee

Our churches are invited to please pay particular attention to the Middle East Initiative which was launched at General Synod and which has Exile and Diaspora as one of its emphases. The initiative includes an opportunity to give financially to support the refugee work: **click here**, and there is information on advocacy opportunities: **click here**. Your church can give on line, or checks can be sent to 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, marked "Refugees." Refugee work is also supported by OGHS and donations can also be made via that route: **OGHS**.

Jottings from June

As a local church pastor, I always enjoyed this time of year when we return from our summer activities and start the fall program season. Rally Day, Homecoming, new book groups, Bible study starting up again, Sunday School, Youth Group are among all the ministries that encourage and enliven us. It is a reflection of the diversity of people and programs in the church that serve the needs of people to deepen their faith, enrich their worship, increase their knowledge, and provides for faithful fellowship.

This kind of activity is no different in the Conference setting. We just concluded the Southeast Conference Board of Directors retreat. My October calendar includes the Alabama-Tennessee-Mississippi Association meeting, the Southern and Southeast Conferences Retired Servants gathering at Blowing Rock Conference Center; the anniversary celebration at Real Inspiration Ministry (formerly Restoration Inclusive Ministries) in Decatur, Atlanta Pride weekend, the annual meeting of the Council of Conference Ministers, the Southern Region Women's Retreat which Southeast Conference is hosting this year, speaking at the Upper Room Fellowship in Nashville, and attending the organizing meeting of the national UCC Regional Theological Education Consortium of which PATHWAYS is a member.

I get excited when I see the diversity of ways in which the United Church of Christ in our local congregations, within the Conference, and in the wider church meets the needs of its members. I hope you take time to read the article about the Neighbors in Need offering. Southeast Conference churches have been important contributors but have also reaped the benefits of the grants awarded to local projects (see the list in the article). Please take the time to read the Caring Community Prayer List for this month so that we can keep churches and ministers in our thoughts and prayers as they engage in this labor of love called ministry.

As we settle into our activities and begin to look forward to Thanksgiving and Advent, let us be grateful for all the blessings of our respective and common ministries and look forward to the new life that we are offered by the grace of the Spirit moving within and among us.

Save the Date

October 2-3 - Alabama-Tennessee Assoc. Annual Meeting
Covenant Community UCC, Center Point, AL

October 5-7 - Retired Servants Retreat
Blowing Rock Conference Center, NC

October 16-18 - Southern Region Women's Retreat
Sumatanga Retreat Center, Gallant, AL

January 15-18, 2016 - Winter Youth Retreat

Blowing Rock Conference Center, Blowing Rock NC

July 26-29, 2016 - National Youth Event in Orlando, Florida
(http://www.ucc.org/news_national_youth_event_2016_09232015)

Winter Youth Retreat 2016

Southeast and Southern Conference youth and leaders are invited to come together January 15-17 at the Blowing Rock Conference Center in the Great Smoky Mountains for a weekend of worship, service, snow, and fun as we take time to build relationships and nurture our faith. This year we will consider the question asked in the Gospel of Luke, "Who is my neighbor?"

Special guests for the weekend include Rev. Waltrina Middleton, the National UCC Minister for Youth Advocacy & Leadership Formation and Alathea, an acoustic, americana-folk, singer-songwriter, harmony-driven female duo from the mountains of Tennessee (alathea.com).

The Winter Youth committee this year is Lacey Brown (Southeast Conference), Sharon Wheeler and Elizabeth Schiemann (Southern Conference).

Visit the Blowing Rock Conference Website for more details and registration forms: http://www.brccenter.org/winter-youth-retreat.html

Real Inspiration Ministry Celebrates their 7th Anniversary

October 9, 10 and 11, 2015 will bring praise and celebration yet again to Real Inspiration Ministry Inc. (RIM) as they celebrate their seventh year anniversary of reaching the masses with a real message that matters to real people! You're invited to take part in this special weekend of celebration with them. Featured guest speaker is Rev. Dr. Yvette A. Flunder, and Presiding Prelate of The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries as well as Senior Pastor/Founder of the City of Refuge UCC in Oakland California. Bishop Flunder is a well sought after Speaker, Singer, Author and Activist.

Read more: secucc.org/real-inspiration-ministry-celebrates-their-7th-anniversary/

Rev. Dr. Dwight Andrews Wins Gospel Choice Awards

Congratulations to Rev. Dr. Dwight Andrews, Gospel Choice Awards 2015 Chosen Pastor and Thomas A. Dorsey Award Winner. The Thomas A. Dorsey Award recognizes an individual who is a trailblazer in the Gospel Music Industry. The recipient for this year's award is Rev. Dwight D. Andrews, First Congregational Church United Church of Christ.

Read more: secucc.org/gospel-choice-awards-2015-chosen-pastor/

Opportunities for Continuing Education

November 3-7: Emotional Intelligence in Moravia, NY

- The Upper New York Conference of the United Methodist Church invites you to a training workshop in emotional intelligence by staff of the Alban Institute Upper New

York. The five-day workshop is scheduled for November 3-7, 2014 at Casowasco Camp and Retreat Center in Moravia, New York. Visit the UNY UMC website for details.

November 16-20: Mediation Skills Training in Columbia, SC

- Consider attending the Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders in Columbia, SC from November 16-20. This training is open to church leaders in all areas of ministry, and is valuable for dealing with current conflict as well as learning to be proactive so that conflict can be transformative. Register now and save $100. Visit the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center website for details.

News from the ONA Coalition

We hope that all of you subscribe to the regular newsletter from the Open and Affirming Coalition. If you don't, we encourage you to check it out. Here's a link to the September 2015 edition.

TACC Training and Counseling Center at St. Luke's

Were you aware of the Clergy Support Group & Discernment Support Group at St. Luke's church in Atlanta? The goal of each group is to provide a safe space for clergy from various denominations to support each other either in the experience of ordained parish ministry and chaplaincy or in the process of discerning if ordained ministry will be one's future. The group facilitators are Stephanie Featherston and Dorothea Lotze-Kola.

The Discernment Group meets every Fridays from 11am-12:30pm and the Clergy Group on Friday from 1:30-3:00 p.m. Learn more at trainingandcounselingcenter.org or by calling 404-876-6266, #2002.

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